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**SANTA ROSA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT SEEKS COALITION MEMBERS FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

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**MILTON, FLA. –** Mental Health was a top health priority for Santa Rosa as identified by the 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment. As a result, the Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County (DOH-Santa Rosa) formed the Behavioral Health Coalition to help educate the public and bring awareness concerning resources to help prevent suicide.

Mental health conditions are often seen as the cause of suicide, but suicide is rarely caused by any single factor. Suicide risk goes beyond a focus on mental health concerns alone. Factors increasing and decreasing suicide risk occur at the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels. Risk factors include:

- Adverse childhood experiences (exposure to violence)
- Relationship, school/job/financial, criminal/legal, and health problems
- Loss of a friend or loved one to suicide
- Prior suicide attempts
- Easy access to lethal means among people at risk
- Substance use
- Mental health concerns

Given the multiple factors associated with suicide, multiple opportunities for prevention and intervention exist.

To prevent suicide and to address the broad range of risk and protective factors (e.g., social connectedness, effective clinical care, problem-solving skills), a comprehensive and coordinated approach is needed. Such an approach involves data driven decision-making, relies on the best available evidence, and requires strong leadership and collaboration of multi-sectoral partners.

“Part of our plan is to work with partners to advance a coordinated and comprehensive public health approach to suicide prevention,” explains Santa Rosa County Public Health Services Manager, Matthew Dobson. “The Florida Suicide Prevention Coalition, EscaRosa Suicide Prevention Coalition, along with mental health providers such as Lakeview and the Avalon Center, help us reach out and treat those that are at risk for suicidal ideations.”

Public health departments are poised to take the lead on advancing a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention due to their focus on social determinants of health (e.g., safe housing, job opportunities, social support, access to health care services, education), and shared risk and protective factors. The local health departments across the state have a long-standing role as community conveners to address complex health challenges; and the essential services they provide to their communities (e.g., monitoring health, mobilizing community partnerships, and evaluating effectiveness of interventions).

To get involved in the Santa Rosa County Behavioral Health Coalition, contact the Health Department at 850-564-2233 or email Matt Dobson at [roger.dobson@flhealth.gov](mailto:roger.dobson@flhealth.gov). Virtual meetings convene on the third Wednesday of each month.

Reference: <http://santarosa.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/community-health-planning-and-statistics/documents/chna-19-digital.pdf>

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